

Kennecott became a self-contained company town, complete with a hospital, general store, schoolhouse, baseball field, skating rink, tennis court, recreation hall and dairy.

Following the boom-bust pattern common to mining economies across the American west, Kennecott became a ghost town soon after the last train pulled out in November of 1938. It was not until the late 60's and 70's that the area was rediscovered by surface mining interests and adventuresome Alaskans attracted to the remote and scenic wilderness setting. The creation of the surrounding Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve in 1980 helped stimulate the growth in tourism that shapes the town today.

The Kennecott mines and mill town tell a story of discovery, perseverance and ingenuity at a time when the world was hungry for copper to build railroads, electrify American cities and supply munitions to the WWI effort. Kennecott helped America meet that challenge and in the process transformed itself from this tiny mountain mining enclave to a large transnational mining corporation.



## Do NOT Remove Artifacts

Historic artifacts are public property. If you stumble upon pieces of the Kennecott history, including small artifacts that you find along the way, please leave them for others to enjoy.

## Explore Kennecott

Today visitors to Kennecott can explore this historic town, the mining and milling operation and the lives of the men, women and children who lived, worked and grew up here. You are invited to explore the streets and the outside of the buildings with this map, join a park ranger for an afternoon history talk at the visitor center, view the new Kennecott History Film in the Recreation Hall or explore the insides of the Mill and Power Plant with St. Elias Alpine Guides. Rangers are available in the Kennecott Visitor Center to help you plan your visit.

## But Be Careful!

The historic buildings in Kennecott are in a state of collapse and disrepair. Since 1999 the National Park Service has been working to improve visitor safety at the mill site through architectural stabilization and lead paint abatement. At this time the doors of the buildings are locked. Local guiding companies have permission to lead groups through the safer parts of buildings. Feel free to explore the outside of the buildings, but remain aware of hazards that still exist.

- Debris is scattered about the area. Watch under foot for sharp or loose objects such as glass, metal scraps or nails. Avoid the steep slopes where loose debris is present.
- Please keep to the gravel paths. Do not attempt to walk on decks or stairs attached to the buildings. Many of these areas are in need of repair.
- The Kennecott Corporation conducted hazardous materials clean up of asbestos, oils and other materials from 1990-1993. Lead contamination is still present in the paint covering the buildings. If hiking to one of the mine sites up the mountain, be aware that these hazards exist.
- Abandoned explosives may be present and in unstable condition. Never handle dynamite blasting caps, or any potentially explosive products. Please notify the National Park Service if you see signs of such explosives.
- Due to the multiple hazards, please keep a close eye on children in this area.

## Wrangell-St. Elias

National Park & Preserve  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



## The Kennecott Story



*In June of 1998, the National Park Service acquired many of the significant buildings and lands of the historic mining town of Kennecott.*

*Designated as a National Historic Landmark since 1986, Kennecott is considered the best remaining example of early 20<sup>th</sup> Century copper mining.*

Kennecott is an extraordinary piece of history in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. The impressive structures that remain at the mill site and mines represent an ambitious time of exploration and discovery in Alaska and a feat of human ingenuity and perseverance in the face of extreme environmental challenge. Kennecott's high grade copper ore was among the richest deposits ever found in United States mining history. Looking up at Bonanza Ridge to the northeast of the present townsite, a visitor can note an abrupt change in rock color at approximately 6,000 feet in elevation. This contour line marks the contact between the Chitistone Limestone (light-colored sedimentary rock above) and the Nikolai Greenstone (dark-colored metamorphosed basalt below). It is this limestone-greenstone contact that USGS geologists noted and reported around 1899 as the dominate structure along which copper ore bodies formed.

In the summer of 1900, prospectors Clarence Warner and "Tarantula Jack" Smith were exploring the east edge of the Kennicott Glacier with this valuable information. As the pair drew closer to the limestone-greenstone contact, they could not miss the magnificent green cliffs of copper exposed on the mountainside. Their discovery, staked as the "Bonanza Mine Outcrop," was sampled revealing up to 70% pure chalcocite copper, a good measure of silver, and a trace of gold. Stephen Birch, an ambitious young mining engineer, eventually purchased this valuable, yet challengingly

remote, claim. Securing the financial backing of some of the most influential families of the time, Birch formed the Alaska Syndicate. This group, which included the Morgans and Guggenheims, became the Kennecott Copper Corporation in 1915. Along with building the mine and mill works, the corporation controlled the entire transportation route, funding the 196-mile Copper River and Northwestern Railway from Kennecott to Cordova and organizing a steamship line that shipped the ore to the smelters in Tacoma, Washington. *Note: The mining company was named after the Kennicott Glacier. However, it was spelled as Kennecott, with an "e," resulting in spelling debates that continue today.*

Successfully meeting countless challenges posed by the extreme Alaska setting, this system of mining and transport engineering operated from 1911, when the railroad was completed, until 1938, when the high grade copper veins were depleted. The total value of the copper extracted was approximately \$200 million. Capital generated from the operation went on to stimulate mining endeavors in other parts of the U.S. and South America.

More than just an industrial relic town, the mill holds stories of human community, past and present. At its peak, the Kennecott operation employed about 600 people: approximately 300 people in the mill camp, where the ore was processed, and 200-300 in the mines up the mountain. Operation and maintenance of the railway required an additional 300 people.

# Kennecott Mill Town

The Kennecott National Historic Landmark invites exploration with its abundance of historic buildings and artifacts. *As you explore, please remember...*

-  Artifacts left on the landscape allow us all to experience our nation's heritage through discovery and exploration. Please leave all artifacts where you find them to allow others to experience the same sense of discovery
-  Portions of the Kennecott National Historic Landmark are private.  
Please respect private property by confining your exploration to park land.
-  The Kennecott National Historic Landmark is a historic industrial site. While significant cleanup efforts have taken place, hazards still exist. Be careful of loose materials, scrap metal and industrial contaminants.
-  A schedule of daily ranger programs and mill tours can be found in the Kennecott Visitor Center.

- |   |                                    |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 1. <b>Concentration Mill</b>            | 13. <b>Carpentry Shop (ruin)</b>   |
| 2. <b>Ammonia Leaching Plant</b>        | 14. <b>General Store</b>           |
| 3. <b>Power Plant</b>                   | 15. <b>Refrigeration Plant</b>     |
| 4. <b>Machine Shop</b>                  | 16. <b>West Bunkhouse</b>          |
| 5. <b>Electrical Shop</b>               | 17. <b>School House</b>            |
| 6. <b>Storage Sheds</b>                 | 18. <b>Bath House</b>              |
| 7. <b>General Manager's Office</b>      | 19. <b>Recreation Hall</b>         |
| 8. <b>Hospital</b>                      | 20. <b>Coal Bunker</b>             |
| 9. <b>Assay Office</b>                  | 21. <b>Dairy Barn</b>              |
| 10. <b>East Bunkhouse</b>               | 22. <b>Cottages</b>                |
| 11. <b>National Creek Bunkhouse</b>     | 23. <b>Tennis Court (ruin)</b>     |
| 12. <b>Train Depot (VISITOR CENTER)</b> | 24. <b>Kennicott Glacier Lodge</b> |



**Bold-faced selections are National Park Service Property**

## Camping:

At this time, there is no camping in the mill town area. There is a primitive hike-in camping area just beyond Jumbo Creek along the Root Glacier Trail. There are also camping opportunities at the end of the McCarthy Road.

The National Park Services cares for special places saved by the American People so that all may experience our heritage

***Experience Your America!***

